



AFRICA/MALI - Strong divisions among political parties in Bamako; contested the deal with the MNLA and Ansar al-Dine

Bamako (Agenzia Fides) - Strong political divisions in Bamako while the north of Mali remains under the control of Islamist groups. As reported to Fides Agency by Fr. Edmond Dembele, Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Mali, the party divisions forced to postpone the great national consultation initially scheduled from November 26 to 28. The meeting will be held from 11 to 13 December.

"The agreement - explains to Fides Fr Dembele - will see the participation of the representatives of the partisan groups and representatives of civil society to discuss the continuation of the transition period in view of new elections. The different political protagonists, however, have not yet reached an agreement on the content of this meeting, and in fact some parties had decided not to participate. The Head of State has decided to postpone it, hoping to find an amicable solution."

Although the negotiations initiated by Burkina Faso (whose President was in charge of the mediation in the Malian crisis by ECOWAS, the Community of West African States) and Algeria with the Azawad Liberation Movement (MNLA) and with Ansar al Dine do not have unanimity among the political forces of Bamako. Fr. Dembele refers: "Some groups of parties and civil society groups are opposed to negotiations with the MNLA in particular because they state that this movement sparked the war. More generally, those who are against the negotiations say that one cannot deal with terrorists who have killed soldiers and Malian civilians, whether it be belonging to the secular MNLA or Islamist Ansar al Dine".

"On the other hand – continues Fr. Dembele - other parties, while not denying that the MNLA and Ansar al Dine have harmed Mali, recognize that these groups formed by Malians are those with whom one needs to deal with."

"At a humanitarian level the situation has worsened," said the Secretary of the Episcopal Conference. "In the region of Mopti, on the border between north Mali occupied by armed groups, and the south, displaced persons continue to arrive every week. Only in this area their number has reached 40-41000. These people find themselves in a precarious situation in the first place because of the scarcity of food and drinking water."

"The inhabitants of the north live under the pressure of Islamists who apply the Sharia law in an obsessive manner starting from the clothing for men and the veil for women. These orders are poorly tolerated by most of the population," concluded Don Dembele. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 27/11/2012)